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ABSTRACT

This book studies the history of changing patterns in the dissemination, or popularization of scientific findings, to the general public since 1830. It focuses on three different areas of science: (1) health; (2) psychology; and (3) the natural sciences. The document explores the ways in which this process of popularization has deteriorated. It draws on evidence ranging from early lyceum lecturers to the new math and argues that today popular science is the functional equivalent of superstition. It is stressed that popularizers, including the media and advertisers, give the public fragments of information without a wider framework, a process that reduces and twists the cultural impact of both science and scientists. This book provides an incisive perspective on the understanding of science, American society, and the forces of irrationalism. (MVL)

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